

Health Benefits of Millet



WHAT IS MILLET?

Millet is a group of small-seeded grasses with more than 6,000 varieties. Among our most ancient grains, millets have been consumed by our ancestors for 10,000 years.

The most popular varieties of millet include pearl, finger, proso and foxtail, with pearl millet being the most widely found in the US. The seeds are tiny and can range from white or gray to yellow or red.

The seeds are often used as bird seed, but millet is great for human health, too. It can be boiled for a whole grain side dish or breakfast porridge, ground for making flatbreads, or fermented to make alcohols. Since millet is gluten-free, it is often ground and used in combination with other flours.

WHAT MAKES MILLET GREAT?

Nutrition

Millet is a whole, intact grain (technically a seed) that is rich in B vitamins (folate, pantothenic acid, niacin, riboflavin and B6), vitamins C, E and K. It is also a good source of minerals (calcium, copper, iron, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium and selenium). It is a source of both soluble and insoluble dietary fiber. Together, these nutrients contribute to protecting us from disease and illness.

B Vitamins and phosphorus

- ◆ Necessary for the body's production of energy, metabolism of sugars and amino acids
- ◆ Precursor to enzymes for metabolism, growth and development, repair of tissues
- ◆ Coenzyme for many reactions in the body

Antioxidant vitamins C, E and mineral selenium

- ◆ Powerful antioxidants protect tissues from dangerous free radicals and oxidation
- ◆ Slow aging and reduce risk of developing disease

Calcium

- ◆ Essential for healthy bones and teeth, works with phosphorus
- ◆ Maintains blood pH, blood clotting, muscle contraction and nerve function

Magnesium, potassium, phosphorus

- ◆ Electrolyte minerals help carry electrical impulses
- ◆ Potassium is critical for muscle contraction, particularly the heart. It also plays a crucial role in fluid balance
- ◆ Magnesium maintains heart rhythms, acts as a catalyst for making DNA and RNA, and improves insulin sensitivity in type 2 diabetes
- ◆ Phosphorus plays a role in energy metabolism, building bones and teeth, regulating pH and helping nerve and muscle transmissions
- ◆ Phosphorus also helps the kidneys filter out waste, builds DNA and RNA, and maintains a regular heartbeat

Warding off Disease

- ◆ Potassium, magnesium and phosphorus help protect the heart
- ◆ Magnesium is also involved with glucose metabolism, making it important for protecting against diabetes
- ◆ Insoluble fiber protects against hemorrhoids, gallstones and diverticulosis
- ◆ Soluble fiber helps regulate blood sugars and lower cholesterol
- ◆ High fiber protects against breast and colon cancer, and provides prebiotic for healthy gut flora
- ◆ Whole grains reduce the risk of childhood asthma
- ◆ Polyphenol antioxidants are particularly helpful in protecting blood vessels from plaque buildup, reducing risk for heart attack, stroke and PAD, and improving blood flow in diabetes



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